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The Christian Science Monitor

New York Daily News

USA Today

The Chicago Tribune

San Diego Union (CA)

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Woodygate

For the first time in his celebrated career, *Washington Post* super sleuth Bob Woodward finds himself on the wrong side of a credibility issue.

Mr. Woodward, who earned his spurs in the Watergate mess, asserts in his latest book that William Casey, the late CIA director, confided to him in what amounts to a deathbed confession that he knew about the diversion of profits to the Contras from the sales of arms to Iran.

The book also alleges that Mr. Casey personally arranged for the Saudi Arabian intelligence service to assassinate the leader of a Shiite Moslem faction in Lebanon with a car bomb. Mr. Woodward says the plot went haywire and 80 innocent bystanders were killed.

These accusations and others are based on what Mr. Woodward describes as four dozen conversations he had with Mr. Casey — from the time the CIA chief was hospitalized in January with a

brain tumor until he died on May 6.

The Washington Post, of which Mr. Woodward is an assistant managing editor, and *Newsweek* published excerpts of the book's sensational charges, thereby bestowing on them the mantle of respectability.

However, a lot of people aren't buying the story, chief among them Mr. Casey's widow, Sophia. Not one to mince words, she called Mr. Woodward a liar. Mrs. Casey said that she and her daughter maintained a vigil at Mr. Casey's side throughout his ordeal. It was impossible, she said, for Mr. Woodward to slip into the room once, much less 48 times, as he maintains.

Sophia Casey took particular umbrage at Mr. Woodward's allegation that her husband considered President Reagan passive, lazy, and "strange." She called that blasphemy, as have many others who knew Mr. Casey and the deep affection he had for the President.

The Post says it is standing behind Mr. Woodward. Fine. But one wonders why Mr. Woodward did not first offer the story to *The Post* when the Iran-Contra hearings were on the front burner and Mr. Casey was still alive. And if he did, why wasn't it published? Perhaps *The Post's* editors weren't comfortable with the idea of publishing the answers to loaded questions asked of a dying man who could barely speak and was infrequently lucid.

Those who recall the Janet Cooke affair are nudging themselves about the questions Mr. Woodward's accusations have raised. *Post* reporter Cooke invented a young narcotics addict in her quest for a Pulitzer Prize, and she did so while under the supervision of Mr. Woodward.

When the sham was exposed, Ms. Cooke lost her job and *The Post* lost its Pulitzer. The only one who didn't lose was Mr. Woodward. It will be interesting to see if his luck is still holding.